

COMMITTEE ON RULES, PRIVILEGES, ELECTIONS, STANDARDS
AND ETHICS

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON RULES, PRIVILEGES,
ELECTIONS, STANDARDS AND ETHICS

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May 6, 2026
Start: 10:34 a.m.
Recess: 12:09 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 BROADWAY - 8TH FLOOR - HEARING
ROOM 3

B E F O R E: Sandra Ung, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Shaun Abreu
Chris Banks
David M. Carr
Elsie Encarnación
Shekar Krishnan
Linda Lee
Kevin C. Riley
Nantasha M. Williams

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Christopher Marte
Gale A. Brewer

A P P E A R A N C E S

Lisa Kersavage, nominee to the New York City
Landmarks Preservation Commission

Frampton Tolbert, Executive Director of the
Historic Districts Council

Sean Khorsandi, Landmark West

Peg Breen, President of the New York Landmarks
Conservancy

Zeynep Turan, Director of Preservation at Friends
of the Upper East Side

Ward Dennis, self

Judith Saltzman, self

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2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Mic check. This is the
3 Committee on Rules, Privileges, Elections, Standards,
4 and Ethics on May 6th, 2026. Located in the Hearing
5 Room 3, recorded by Jordan Polite.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning, and
7 welcome to today's New York City Council hearing for
8 the Committee on Rules, Privileges, Elections,
9 Standards and Ethics.

10 At this time, I would like to remind
11 everyone to silence all electronic devices.

12 Also at this point, going forward, no one
13 is supposed to approach the dais.

14 Chair, we're ready to begin.

15 CHAIRPERSON UNG: [GAVEL] Good morning,
16 and welcome to this meeting of the Committee on
17 Rules, Privileges, Elections, Standards and Ethics.
18 I'm Council Member Ung, Chair of the Committee.
19 Before we begin, I would like to recognize other
20 Members of the Committee who are present. Council
21 Member Riley, we're also joined by Council Member
Marte. I would also like to acknowledge the Counsel
to the Committee, Jeff Campagna, and the Committee
Staff that worked on today's hearing, Director of
Public Integrity Francesca Dellavecchia, Deputy

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2 Director of Public Integrity Alycia Vassell, and
3 Chief Ethics Counsel Pearl Moore.

4 By letter dated April 24th, 2026, Mayor
5 Zohran Mamdani requested the advice and consent of
6 the Council regarding his proposed appointment of
7 Lisa Kersavage to be a member of the Landmarks
8 Preservation Commission. Today, we'll hold a public
9 hearing pursuant to Section 31 of the Charter to
consider this nomination.

10 Section 3020 of the Charter establishes
11 that the New York City Landmarks Preservation
12 Commission, also known as LPC, is responsible for
13 establishing and regulating landmarks, portion of
14 landmarks, landmark sites, interior landmarks, and
15 scenic landmarks and historic districts. The LPC also
16 regulates alterations to designated buildings. The
17 LPC consists of 11 members. The membership must
18 include at least three architects, one historian
19 qualified in the field, one city planner, a landscape
20 architect, and one realtor, and must include at least
21 one resident from each of the five boroughs. Members
serve for the term of three years and serve until the
appointment of a successor. The mayor also designates
one of the LPC members to serve as the Chair of the

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2 LPC and designates another member to serve as Vice
3 Chair of the LPC. These LPC members shall serve until
4 a successor is designated. The members of the LPC,
5 with the exception of the Chair, serves without
6 compensation but reimbursed for necessary expenses
7 and incurred in the course of performing their
duties.

8 The Mayor has expressed his intent to
9 designate Ms. Kersavage to be the new Chair of the
Commission. The Chair's current salary is \$223,319.

10 Lisa Kersavage joins us today. She has
11 been on the staff of the Landmark Preservation
12 Commission since 2015, when she joins the Director of
13 Special Projects and Strategic Planning. Since 2019,
14 she has been the Executive Director of the agency, in
15 which role she conceived, drafted, executed the
16 agency's equity agenda to ensure diversity and
inclusion in LPC's historic designations.

17 Prior to joining LPC from 2012 to 2015,
18 Ms. Kersavage was a project manager at the Van Alen
19 Institute, where she oversaw a 3-million design
20 competition to develop a sustainable vision of the
21 lower Mississippi Delta. From 2004 to 2012, she
worked at the Municipal Arts Society as a fellow, as

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2 a director of advocacy and policy, and as a senior
3 director of preservation and sustainability, where
4 she led the campaign to construct the Moynihan
5 Station. She also served as executive director of the
6 Friends of the Upper East Side Historic District from
7 1999 to 2004, and from 1997 to 1999, where she was a
8 publication specialist at what is now known as Enid
9 Architects. Ms. Kersavage earned her Bachelor's of
10 Arts in Art History from Pennsylvania State
11 University and Master's Degree in Historic
12 Preservation from Columbia University.

13 If appointed, Ms. Kersavage will serve
14 the remainder of a three-year term that will expire
15 on June 28, 2028. Welcome, Ms. Kersavage, and thank
16 you for being with us here today.

17 Before you begin, please raise your right
18 hand to be sworn in.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL CAMPAGNA: Do you affirm
20 to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but
21 the truth in your testimony before this Committee,
and in answer to all Council Member questions.

LISA KERSAVAGE: I do.

CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. You're now
recognized to give opening statement.

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2 LISA KERSAVAGE: Thank you very much,
3 Chair Ung. Good morning to you and Council Member
4 Marte, and to Members of the Committee on Rules,
5 Privileges, Elections, Standards and Ethics. I'm
6 honored to be Mayor Mamdani's nominee to be Chair of
the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

7 I believe the work of LPC is important,
8 and that the preservation of historic resources can
9 support communities, foster economic development, and
10 contribute to the vitality of New York City. I bring
11 to the Commission more than two decades of experience
12 working at the intersection of historic preservation,
13 urban planning, and sustainability, as well as a
14 strong track record of executive leadership in both
15 government and the non-profit sector. I believe my
16 experience and approach to preservation will enable
me to serve as an effective Chair, and I hope that
you will support my nomination.

17 An interest in architectural history and
18 urban planning brought me to the field and has shaped
19 the direction of my career. Having a lifelong dream
20 of living and working in New York City, I was excited
21 to move here for graduate studies at Columbia
University, where I focused on the public policy and

2 urban planning aspects of historic preservation.

3 After working at the preservation non-profit Friends
4 of the Upper East Side Historic Districts, I held
5 senior positions at the Municipal Arts Society of New
6 York, where the advocacy was deliberately
7 interdisciplinary, looking at how preservation can
8 contribute to neighborhood plans, rezonings, and
9 economic development projects. That approach to
10 historic preservation has been an important guiding
11 principle to me. At MAS, I led a large project to
12 improve the energy efficiency and sustainability of
13 historic buildings.

14 Later, I was able to apply my resiliency
15 and climate change interest, leading an ambitious
16 design competition sponsored by the Environmental
17 Defense Fund and Van Alen Institute, convening global
18 teams of interdisciplinary experts to reimagine a
19 more sustainable Lower Mississippi River Delta.

20 Subsequently, I joined LPC, where I've
21 worked for 11 years, serving first as the Director of
Strategic Planning and Special Projects, and for the
last seven years as Executive Director. In the time
that I've been at the agency, I have helped make
advancements to increase efficiency, transparency,

2 and accessibility of our permitting process, to
3 designate significant historic resources across the
4 city and prioritizing places that reflect the city's
5 diversity, and to educate property owners about
6 permitting processes and grant opportunities.

7 Taking on the role of Chair at this time
8 is personally important, as I'm motivated to help
9 advance the goals of the Mamdani Administration to
10 address affordability, increase housing, and make
11 government work for all New Yorkers. As Chair,
12 addressing housing issues would be a priority, and
13 would align with my interdisciplinary approach to the
14 field. Finding the right balance between protecting
15 the character of New York City's historic districts
16 and landmarks, while allowing for the development of
17 new housing, is an obligation that I'm confident in
18 my abilities to take on.

19 Another priority for me is continuing to
20 advance equitable representation and designations,
21 prioritizing those that reflect New York City's
diversity and that are in areas less represented by
landmarks and striving to tell the story of all New
Yorkers. In addition, I believe it is important to
work closely with agencies, such as the Department of

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2 City Planning, to identify opportunities for
3 preservation in areas planned for growth.

4 Supporting property owners of designated
5 landmarks is another priority. As Chair, I will
6 continue advancing our work to support property
7 owners, ensure that we are issuing guidance that is
8 clear, and that we consider rule amendments to
9 expedite the type of work typically undertaken by
small property owners.

10 Another priority is addressing
11 sustainability issues in our historic resources.
12 Encouraging work that sensitively improves energy
13 efficiency and resiliency is important, and I will
14 consider measures to streamline permitting to support
this type of work.

15 Finally, supporting and nurturing LPC
16 staff is also a priority. Over my time at LPC, I've
17 witnessed their dedication to the field, and to the
18 New York City residents that they serve, and I'm
honored to lead such a talented team.

19 I'm excited for the future of
20 preservation in New York City, and thank the City
21 Council for considering and supporting my nomination
as Chair of the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

2 Thank you again for offering the opportunity to
3 testify, and I'm happy to answer any questions that
4 you may have.

5 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. We're also
6 joined by Council Member Lee, and I will ask you some
7 questions before I turn it over to my Colleagues.

8 As the Executive Director of LPC, you
9 played a leading role in crafting and implementing
10 the agency's equity initiative. Can you explain what
11 that is?

12 LISA KERSAVAGE: Sure. What we did is look
13 at agency-wide how we could improve equity
14 transparency across the entire agency. Some of that
15 work was related to making sure that our permitting
16 processes was very clear for everybody. LPC is an
17 unusual agency in that our applicants range from
18 individual property owners to, say, architects or
19 land-use attorneys, so we wanted to make sure that
20 the individual property owners have equal access to
21 information that they could apply to LPC on their
own, and make sure that our staff was working with
them closely to help support them. I think most
importantly, too, with our landmark designations, we
really sought to prioritize designations that reflect

2 the diversity of the city, and to also look at
3 designations that are geographically diverse in the
4 city as well, and to undertake research that is very
5 inclusive, that really makes sure to tell those
6 stories. I think especially telling the stories of
7 social justice and civil rights is also very
8 important to us, so we use that as a framework to
9 prioritize designations over the last several years.
10 I think that work is very important and will
11 continue.

12 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you.

13 When analyzing whether a site should be
14 landmark, how should the historic nature of a site be
15 balanced with its aesthetic uniqueness?

16 LISA KERSAVAGE: That's a great question.
17 The Landmarks Law is quite broad, but we, over the 60
18 years of the agency, have developed criteria and
19 comparative analysis to really look at how we can
20 identify places that merit designation. Typically,
21 places are architecturally significant, but we also
can recognize historic significance, cultural
significance, and we usually look at the combination
of all of them to determine that significance.

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2 CHAIRPERSON UNG: We've also been joined
3 by Council Member Encarnación.

4 As Executive Director, how do you respond
5 to requests for designation for advocates? Can you
6 explain the regulatory thresholds for these
7 designations?

8 LISA KERSAVAGE: Sure. LPC is unique, I
9 think, in that we don't have applications for
10 designations. Other cities do that, but we do have a
11 process to have people request whether a site may
12 merit designation, and that's the request for
13 evaluation. Those come in to us and our research
14 department, guided by our Director of Research,
15 analyzes whether the property may merit designation.
16 We do a lot of research into these sites and then
17 respond to the person who sent it to us. Importantly,
18 that information goes into our survey. If it is a
19 place that merits designation, it goes into a survey,
20 but it doesn't necessarily lead to a designation.

21 CHAIRPERSON UNG: I'm sorry. Can you
clarify what does it mean, going to a survey?

LISA KERSAVAGE: So, our research
department has surveys of historic buildings,
historically, culturally, and architecturally

2 significant buildings across the city. Those are our
3 internal working guidelines for places, and we refer
4 to them in environmental review and other analysis
5 that we do. Some of those we advance to designate,
6 either as an individual landmark, interior landmark,
or a historic district.

7 CHAIRPERSON UNG: And do you explain that
8 whole process to advocates about how to get the
9 designation? How do you explain the whole process to
advocates?

10 LISA KERSAVAGE: Yeah. And it's, I admit,
11 a bit confusing. Because I think people do often
12 think there is an application process for
13 designation, so we do try very hard to communicate
14 that clearly. I think the advocacy organizations, I
15 think, understand that, but I think particularly
16 individual property owners sometimes reach out to us
17 or other people. We do, in our responses to people,
18 try and explain that. And if a building merits
19 designation, that it doesn't necessarily mean that we
20 are going to then put it forward through the
21 designation process.

2 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Okay. And this
3 explanation is usually in a letter? Do you have a
4 meet? Like, what is the...

5 LISA KERSAVAGE: It's usually in the
6 letter, yes, and we have it on our website as well.

7 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Okay. So, what other
8 public education or outreach would you set
9 expectations, explain the standards for landmarking
10 certificate of appropriateness and hardship
11 applications?

12 LISA KERSAVAGE: Sure. So, a certificate
13 of appropriateness is what we issue for a project
14 that would be going to a public hearing, so that's
15 part of our permitting process. And I should say LPC
16 issues about 12,000 permits a year, and about 95
17 percent of those are approved by a staff level
18 because they meet our rules, and about 5 percent of
19 permits will go to a public hearing, and those are
20 the permits that require certificate of
21 appropriateness typically. And for that, if a project
doesn't meet our rules, then it's really our
Commissioners that decide is this appropriate, is
this proposed work appropriate? And, you know, so
it's based on our decades of permitting. You know, I

2 think it allows them some discretion, but they're
3 making sure that it is appropriate to the historic
4 character of the landmark or to the historic
5 district. So, that's that permitting question.

6 A hardship application is very important.
7 You know, what makes our law constitutional is that
8 there is a process of hardship that if somebody finds
9 that, you know, they are no longer able to have an
10 economic return on their property, then, you know,
11 they can file for a hardship application, and we go
12 through a very, very careful review of that. It's a
13 complex process. It happens very rarely. There's been
14 about 23 in the history of the agency, but it is an
15 important for the constitutionality of the landmarks
16 law.

17 CHAIRPERSON UNG: So, the way you're
18 explaining it right now, thank you, how would the
19 public know this? Like, what is the process of
20 letting the public know this is the process?

21 LISA KERSAVAGE: Yeah. And there is a
22 hardship application before the Commission now, and
23 we, for example, did a video on YouTube to try and
24 explain what the hardship application process is.

25 We're very transparent with all of the materials, and

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2 they are many thousands of pages. They are big,
3 complex projects, but we put all of that information
4 on our website, and we try during the hearing or
5 public meeting process to explain, but it is
6 admittedly probably the most technically difficult
7 and probably sort of confusing sort of process that
8 we have, but they are very, very rare that they come
before the Commission.

9 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you.

10 We also have been joined by Minority
Leader Carr and Council Member Krishnan.

11 I do have more questions, but I'll turn
12 it over to Council Member Marte.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Thank you, Chair
14 Ung, and thank you for being here.

15 First, I just want to say we were
16 thrilled about the recent decision about the
17 landmarking of St. Mary's Church on the Lower East
18 Side, and also the Commission's decision to save 139
19 Thompson Street from demolition despite the argument
20 from the owner that preservation wasn't possible, so
21 thank you. It was under your interim leadership that
we were able to get those two successful outcomes.

2 You know, more broadly, we've seen
3 landmarking decline in recent years since the
4 beginning of the pandemic. Do you plan to increase
5 our landmarking efforts now to make them similar to
6 pre-COVID numbers?

7 LISA KERSAVAGE: Yes. And, you know, I
8 understand that our numbers did go down, and, you
9 know, the pandemic and other issues really did result
10 in that, but I do think the preservation numbers
11 might not be the best metric for assessing our
12 designations, but they did admittedly drop, you know,
13 during that time. You know, I think with, you know,
14 our focus on equity, we are looking at designations
15 in areas where we haven't done as much research or
16 the owner outreach sometimes can take longer, so I
17 think the quality of our designations is a very, very
18 important metric, but certainly, you know, we're
19 looking at potential designations across all five
20 boroughs. You know, we designated two historic
21 districts recently in Brooklyn, you know, so I think
we are surveying across all five boroughs all the
time to identify potential resources. We do owner
outreach frequently, and, you know, so there can be
ebbs and flows in those numbers of designations.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Okay. Demolition by
3 neglect continues to be a serious issue for
4 landmarks. Would you support legislation aimed at
5 better protecting neglected landmarks through
6 stricter enforcement of neglect, more resources for
7 rehabilitation efforts, and greater oversight over
demolition applications?

8 LISA KERSAVAGE: Sure. You know, and
9 demolition by neglect cases, I recognize can be, you
10 know, challenging for everybody. They, again, are
11 very rare, and just so people know, a demolition by
12 neglect is when a property declines to a point where,
13 you know, it becomes an unsafe building and DOB would
14 require its demolition because it's unsafe. It
15 happens very rarely, and oftentimes, you know, we're
16 dealing with property owners who are, you know,
17 struggling typically, so I think there might be a
18 perception that it's developers or bad actors, but
19 it's typically not that. So, we have a strong law, we
20 have a strong enforcement policy, we have dedicated
21 staff who really work very hard and very carefully
with DOB and other partners to try to, you know, get
appropriate action or even, you know, potentially to
try and find new buyers for the properties. So, we

2 understand that every time this happens it's
3 upsetting, but it does happen extremely rarely, but I
4 think we have the tools that we need to address this
5 issue.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Thank you for that.

7 In your opening remarks, you mentioned
8 that you want to continue the work that LPC has been
9 doing on an equity framework and looking for areas
10 outside of traditional landmarking neighborhoods for
11 opportunity. Are there anything new you want to
12 create within the LPC or any new initiatives that
13 like you care about that you feel like hasn't been
14 addressed yet?

15 LISA KERSAVAGE: Yeah. That's an exciting
16 question. You know, and I'm proud of the work that
17 we've done in recent years, so I think in many ways
18 it's continuing on with some of this work. You know,
19 I'm personally very interested in technology. I was
20 very proud of our new portal, Portico, our permitting
21 software, and we are about to undertake a big effort
to redo a lot of our technology. And while that's
kind of insider, I get very excited about that and
how we can really improve customer experience through

2 these software improvements. So, I'm personally
3 excited about that.

4 Also, really increasing our
5 sustainability and resiliency work, as I mentioned. I
6 think that's important. We've just recently done a
7 survey of property owners to see what barriers there
8 might be to things like flood proofing their homes,
9 so I'm excited to think through how we can do more
10 educational work or maybe think about rules or, you
11 know, sort of encourage property owners to do that
12 kind of very important work to protect their
13 properties. And I think, you know, the landmark
14 designations are also important, you know, and our
15 equity work will continue, and that has been very
16 meaningful to me personally, to really sort of lift
17 all the voices in New York City through those
18 designations.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Thank you for that.

20 Piggybacking off the Chair's question
21 about how can a local advocate or activist, you know,
move forward with an application or submit an
application. As we know locally, we typically partner
with amazing organizations like LESPI, Village
Preservation, HTC, who are experts in this. But let's

2 say if I was an individual that wasn't in that bubble
3 of expertise, would you be open to having a much
4 simpler, streamlined application for the average
5 citizen just to at least show interest in a site?

6 LISA KERSAVAGE: Absolutely. And, you
7 know, I think what's really important in New York
8 City, and I think is unique nationally, is that we
9 don't have an application process. There are many
10 other cities where you have to come to the Municipal
11 Preservation Organization with a fully, you know,
12 fleshed out nomination that can cost a lot of money,
13 and we certainly don't require any of that. And we're
14 always happy to meet with communities to talk about
15 potential designations. Nobody has to do any serious
16 work or hire any experts. They can come to us and
17 talk to us about that. And we can, you know, go out
18 into the field and look at these resources. We may
19 have already surveyed the area, so we might have a
20 sense of whether a place merits or not merits. But I
21 would say people should just reach out to us. They
don't need to hire somebody. It's great when they
work with preservation organizations, but they don't
have to. They can come directly to us. Community
Boards can as well. So, we're very open to just

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2 starting with a conversation or some basic
3 information.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Okay. Thank you.

5 Those are all my questions, Chair.

6 CHAIRPERSON UNG: We also have been joined
7 by Deputy Speaker Williams and Majority Leader Abreu.

8 I would like to turn it over to Council
9 Member Krishnan.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you so
11 much, Chair, and Lisa, it's great to see you too, and
12 thank you for your testimony today as well.

13 I just had one question, which is about
14 how you in this role would approach balancing
15 community perspective with the work of LPC. I think
16 that is really important. I mean, in Jackson Heights,
17 for example, we have a historic district, but also
18 across the city. There are times where the community
19 feels strongly that what is best and what makes the
20 most sense is landmarking something, and we need to
21 get that done and push it through. There are other
times where a community feels it's important to
protect this space for one purpose or another, and
LPC may have a role to play there as well. And I
think oftentimes it's crucial, especially in

2 neighborhoods that are suffering from great
3 inequities, whether it be serious rates of
4 gentrification or displacement, or in my case, lack
5 of public space and green space. That community
6 feedback and perspective is really important to take
7 into account. And I'm curious how LPC, under your
8 leadership, would approach that, how you would think
9 about navigating balancing. And as I said, it could
10 cut different ways on a different issue, but I think
11 it's more the principle of making sure that the
12 community is well-represented and their voices are
13 heard and factored into the decision-making that LPC
14 makes. And I'd love to hear your perspective on that.

15 LISA KERSAVAGE: Sure. And, you know, we
16 have public hearings almost every Tuesday, so we
17 welcome, you know, testimony and feedback from the
18 community, and we get quite a bit of it. You know, I
19 think it's always a balance. We do have to make
20 merit-based decisions, both in terms of landmark
21 designation issues and also for our permitting. And
so, you know, in an ideal world, you know, we're all
kind of aligned on, you know, the merit and an action
and the community voice, but sometimes that doesn't
happen. You know, we do want to be mindful that

2 historic preservation isn't used to, say, stop
3 development, but I think that, especially at our
4 public hearings, the community voice is very
5 important. You know, our Commissioners are New York
6 City residents, and, you know, I think really do try
7 and take into consideration the concerns, the
8 suggestions, the recommendations by communities and
9 community boards. So, it is an important part of the
10 process. When we hear from the community about
11 potential landmark designations, it's also very
12 important to us, or elected officials. We take that
13 very seriously. Again, we are bound by making those
14 merit-based decisions, but, you know, it can be very
15 helpful for us to hear from a community that there's
16 historic resources out there that maybe we don't know
about. Maybe we don't know the full story. Maybe
there's cultural significance about a place that we
weren't aware of so it is very important to us.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Great. Thank you
18 very much.

19 Thank you, Chair.

20 CHAIRPERSON UNG: I'd like now to turn it
21 over to Deputy Speaker Williams.

2 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Hi. So, my
3 District includes two landmark districts so these
4 issues are not theoretical for us. They directly
5 affect homeowners and our institutions and the
6 neighborhood character, which is something that my
7 constituents are extremely, extremely passionate
8 about. And so, I know you've emphasized supporting
9 housing and affordability as a priority. How do you
10 ensure that push does not come at the expense of
11 preserving historic sites and landmark protections?

12 LISA KERSAVAGE: Thank you. It's a great
13 question, and we are very excited to designate those
14 two districts in your District. You know, I think
15 that housing issues are the, you know, most critical
16 issue of today in the city, and I think, you know, we
17 are working to really find that balance of how we can
18 create opportunity for housing. And the Commission,
19 over its 60 years, has regularly approved additions,
20 new buildings, and created housing, and adapted reuse
21 projects, too so converting, say, a manufacturing and
industrial building to housing. It's been decades of
experience doing that. But I think, you know, there
is a crisis now. I think we need to try and figure
out that balance. You know, we've recently approved

2 some larger projects in historic districts or in
3 individual landmarks to allow that housing. I think
4 we've found that balance of preservation and housing
5 opportunity, and I think it's something that is
6 important for, you know, me to focus on, and I'm
excited to take on that challenge.

7 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Thank you. The
8 Merchant's House case raised concerns about whether
9 LPC is doing enough to protect landmarks from
adjacent development. Do you believe LPC got that
10 case right, and what does that say about how you'll
11 approach similar conflicts? And I will say, I think
12 this is like my theme of concern, because I think the
13 Merchant's House should be preserved, and I know that
14 LPC really hasn't been a good partner in making sure
15 that that house isn't harmed, and I do believe the
16 adjacent property is set to build housing, which I
17 know we need, but I don't think that building housing
18 should come at the expense of potentially elimination
19 of critical history, especially considering the
on the Underground Railroad.

20 LISA KERSAVAGE: Sure. Happy to answer
21 that. And, you know, I will say abolitionist history

2 is incredibly important, and, you know, uncovering
3 new information, you know, about that history is
4 great. I mean, it's difficult history to uncover, so
5 we're excited about the findings there. And, you
6 know, specific to that application, it is something
7 that is before the Commission now, so I can speak
8 broadly about it, but it is something potentially I
9 would be voting on. But it is a project that in the
10 past, LPC did approve a new building adjacent to the
11 Merchant's House. With the approval, through our
12 consulting engineers' advice, we came up with a list
13 of 10 things that they had to do to safeguard the
14 Merchant's House, and specifically the plaster inside
15 the Merchant's House Museum. So, the previous
16 approval came with an extra level of requirements
17 from LPC, in addition to those by DOB. They are
18 really the agency charged with that kind of safety
19 for any construction that's adjacent to a landmark.
20 They have to also submit something to DOB to ensure
21 that they are safeguarding the structure of the
landmark. So, it's an important issue to us. We
recognize that it's an important issue to the
Merchant's House Museum, and to the Parks Department
that owns the property. And as we go through this

2 process, you know, we will be looking at those kinds
3 of safeguards in the future as well.

4 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Yes. I feel like
5 the times call for that. I mean, I don't feel like I
6 don't have to say it, but I mean, we see the erasure
7 of particularly Black history, and I think New York
8 overall like has not done a great job of preserving
9 slave abolitionists or Black history. I know Council
10 Member Marte and I had sponsored a bill to create
11 like a trail, just mapping certain locations. So, I
12 mean, this is, I think, something that should be
13 preserved and taken very seriously. And again, I know
14 we need to build housing, but I don't think we should
15 do that at the expense of potentially ruining the
16 house and like not prioritizing history, which I
17 think is so important considering everything that is
18 happening right now.

19 LISA KERSAVAGE: And look, I agree with
20 you on all accounts. So, for the safeguarding of the
21 building, you know, there is construction in New York
City adjacent to landmarks and very old landmarks,
you know, frequently and, you know, they've been able
to do that without harm to an adjacent building so I

2 think we need to carefully look at this, but I think
3 it has happened across the city.

4 In terms of the abolitionist history, I
5 agree that it's really crucial history, and I think
6 for today, you can, you know, in our environment, you
7 can look back to that time and see, you know,
8 analogous history that is also important and
9 inspiring. We actually, LPC worked with a historian
10 to create an abolition trail in Brooklyn, and it
11 exists now. It is virtual. You can go and scan a QR
12 code to take it, where we have about 12 sites that
13 you can stop by and learn that had documented
14 abolition and underground history. I think it's,
15 personally for me, just a fascinating period of our
16 history, inspiring, important, and I agree that we
17 can do more to recognize it.

18 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Yeah. And even
19 the Merchant families themselves, I know that's like
20 the last remaining house in New York City from that
21 time period. So anyway, I just wanted to advocate for
the Merchant House.

Another question that I have that was not
pre-prepared, but now I'm interested, are there any
stipulations when developers get approval to build

2 next to a historic house? Like if something is, if
3 something happens, does that developer, are they held
4 accountable for that? Is there any type of, again,
5 like stipulations or things that could be done if
6 like the... because I know their biggest challenge,
7 they really truly feel like the foundation is going
8 to be destroyed if, depending on how that development
9 gets carried out. So, I'm just wondering, is there
10 anything that makes them accountable to like fixing
11 something or ensuring something, or if like something
12 goes wrong, is it kind of like, oh well, it's up to
13 the Merchant House to figure it out?

14 LISA KERSAVAGE: Well, when you're doing
15 construction next to a, you know, landmark building
16 or historic district building, you do have to file a
17 construction protection plan. You know, I can't
18 answer your question because it is a DOB process of
19 exactly what the... if there's a penalty or another
20 process. And so, I would have to get back to you on
21 that, but I know that this construction protection
plan is...

22 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: I figured it
23 might not have been LPC, but I was just wondering if
24 you did have any thoughts on that because you do play

2 a critical role in making a determination on whether
3 or not something like this is even feasible.

4 LISA KERSAVAGE: Right. And I mean, we
5 work closely with DOB to make sure that we are, you
6 know, protecting our historic resources and, you
7 know, there are the requirements through them for any
8 building to make sure that it's, you know, the
9 construction of a new building, you know, doesn't
10 harm an adjacent one. But there is, you know, special
11 considerations with the older ones, but we can get
12 back to you.

13 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Okay. No
14 problem.

15 Okay. You noted that LPC is considering
16 rule changes to support ADUs. What would that
17 actually look like in historic districts, like those
18 in my District? So, I fought really hard during City
19 of Yes to get substantial carveouts because the many
20 wonderful constituents in, particularly in the
21 historic part of my District who actually fought to
get this landmark, the City didn't come to them. They
worked and organized together as a community to get
this part of the community landmarked. They are very
concerned and were very concerned during City of Yes

2 about how ADUs would impact neighborhood character.

3 So, just wanted some more insight there.

4 LISA KERSAVAGE: Sure. And so, City of Yes
5 allowed for certain types of ADUs in historic
6 districts. So, you can't build new building ADUs, but
7 you can convert an existing ancillary structure and
8 then you can do basement and attic ADUs in single
9 family districts, and you also can't do a detached.
10 So, there's certain types of ADUs you can't do in
11 historic districts, but some that you can.

12 We have not yet actually received an
13 application for an ADU in a historic district. I
14 understand your concerns, but we're actually excited
15 by the opportunity of them, and so as we start to get
16 more applications, we will understand the work types
17 associated with ADUs. We are predicting some related
18 to the ancillary structures, typically garage
19 buildings, what might be needed so I think we're
20 trying to anticipate, you know, what that work might
21 be and what rules could help streamline that kind of
review. And we don't think that it's going to be an
impact on the historic character of districts. And I
think, personally, I think it can be exciting to see
these be built.

2 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: So, to that
3 point, LPC does still need to approve any
4 adjustments. It isn't that these homeowners can now
5 just, but they still do have to go through a process
6 as they do for many different things when they want
7 to, sometimes to their dismay, when they want to fix
8 something on their homes, they do kind of have to
9 deal with LPC in some form so are you saying that
10 they still will have to deal with LPC if they want to
11 make any adjustments or put an ADU onto their home?

12 LISA KERSAVAGE: For any work that impacts
13 the exterior of either the primary building or the
14 secondary building, they will have to come to us. If
15 it's interior work, that wouldn't be reviewed by us.
16 It's really just the exterior.

17 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Okay. No
18 problem.

19 So, in communities like Addisleigh Park,
20 residents have expressed strong concerns about ADUs
21 and density creep. How will you ensure these policies
do not gradually change the character of low-density
landmark neighborhoods?

LISA KERSAVAGE: Well, I think for the
historic character issues, you know, because these

2 ADUs and historic districts are limited to, you know,
3 the basement, the attic, or an existing structure, I
4 don't think from a historic character perspective
5 that this would meaningfully change, you know, that
6 historic character.

6 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Okay.

7 We've also heard concerns about delays
8 within LPC, particularly around research and project
9 review. In my District, there has been a request to
10 explore expanding the boundaries of the Addisleigh
11 Park Historic District that has been sitting without
12 movement for months. How will you address backlog and
13 responsiveness issues within the agency?

13 LISA KERSAVAGE: Yeah. So, when people
14 request an evaluation for a potential district or
15 expansion of a district, that research does take us
16 some time. You know, we really go building by
17 building and look very carefully. You know, so, I
18 understand that, you know, that can seem like it's a
19 long time, and we can work on our responsiveness to
20 those issues. I know that that's being evaluated
21 right now by our staff, and we'll be able to get back
on that shortly.

DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you.

2 We've also heard consistently from
3 cultural institutions that the LPC process is too
4 slow, too complex, and too costly, with projects
5 taking years and organizations fronting money they do
6 not have. What specific changes will you make to
7 streamline approvals and improve coordination across
8 agencies, particularly with cultural institutions
that are landmarked?

9 LISA KERSAVAGE: Yes. And, you know, our
10 cultural institutions are incredibly important to the
11 city, to the city's economy, and, you know, we're
12 thrilled when they're an historic building. You know,
13 we have not had the experience of cultural
institutions saying that there's such long delays, so
I'm happy to know about any specific examples.

14 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: The Bronx Zoo
15 specifically has a project that they're working on,
16 and LPC, it's been an interesting back and forth
17 around these honestly ugly gates on the building that
18 apparently are landmarked, and they have to go
19 through some particular process. It is costing them
20 more money, and it is taking more time for what I
21 consider to be these ugly green gates on the windows.

2 LISA KERSAVAGE: We're happy to talk to
3 them.

4 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: It's a historic
5 landmark, and so...

6 LISA KERSAVAGE: Yeah. We actually haven't
7 received recent applications from them, but we can
8 reach out. We can, you know, work on this together.
9 We're happy to do that. We know they've done
10 award-winning work, actually, on their landmarks
11 buildings, and did some of the first LEED-certified
12 historic building restorations there. They've done
13 great work, and we've been happy to support them, but
14 it is an important issue, and we're always really
15 working to make sure that we're approving permits
16 efficiently. You know, and whether it's a big
17 cultural institution like the Met, where we approved,
18 you know, their recent expansion, and that does take
19 a little bit longer, but I think we worked really
20 productively and had a great outcome there. You know,
21 or when it's a smaller cultural institution, you
know, typically our work can, if it's approved by
staff, that can happen in a matter of a couple of
weeks. If it needs a public hearing, that can happen
in three months to go through the full process with

2 the community board, and then our hearing process.

3 So, we really do pride ourselves on being very
4 efficient and trying to work particularly with
5 cultural institutions and NGOs. So, it's very
6 important to us. We're happy to get the feedback,
7 happy to work with you on this, and really make sure
8 that we're being as responsive as we need to be.

9 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Has LBC ever
10 waived certain requirements if someone is doing a
11 construction capital project? Well, let's just say a
12 cultural institution, like is there a precedent for
13 waiving certain requirements?

14 LISA KERSAVAGE: You know, under the law,
15 we wouldn't be able to do that, but often what we'll
16 do is work with cultural institutions to say, if you,
17 you know, did the work this way, you know, the staff
18 could approve this because it meets our rules, and
19 this will be faster. You know, we allow for
20 replacement materials and other ways to make projects
21 more affordable. So, you know, we are very hands-on
and really try and work with people to meet their
needs and also to get to, yes, we want these projects
to be approved.

2 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Okay. Final
3 question.

4 How do you plan to work with
5 organizations like the Historic Districts Council and
6 the New York Landmarks Conservancy, especially when
7 community-driven landmarking efforts need additional
support and agency capacity is limited?

8 LISA KERSAVAGE: Yeah. We love working
9 with our non-profit friends. You know, I know New
10 York Landmarks Conservancy, HDC are here, and always
11 looking for ways to partner. We actually partner a
12 lot with the Landmarks Conservancy on our outreach
13 because they can offer property owners some valuable
14 technical assistance and loans, and we have a small
15 grant program so, we work often with organizations.
16 I'm happy to continue to do that. I come from the
non-profit historic preservation world, so I'm happy
to keep bolstering these relationships.

17 CHAIRPERSON UNG: I'd like to now turn it
18 over to Minority Leader Carr.

19 MINORITY LEADER CARR: Hi. Good afternoon.
20 Thank you for being here.

21 I want to talk a little bit about what
the Deputy Speaker was talking about with respect to

2 the difficulties that people expect when a
3 landmarking gets designated, because typically we
4 often encounter owners, whether they're a
5 not-for-profit owner or just a private owner, who is
6 concerned that the honor of getting the landmarking
7 comes with significant cost escalations and
8 complications when it comes to maintaining or
9 improving the site. And so, what do we have available
10 to us in the City with respect to assisting these
11 owners when it comes time for them to engage in some
12 basic repairs that now may be actually really out of
proportion with what they would have had to pay if it
was just a regular building?

13 LISA KERSAVAGE: It's a great question,
14 and we have invested a lot in working with smaller
15 property owners, and I think it's really important.
16 Our staff are very hands-on, and we encourage any
17 property owner that just has questions about, you
18 know, they're just thinking about work to reach out
19 to, especially to our public information officer, to
20 just start that process, because I think if we can
21 talk to the property owners, we can share the
options. We have a permit application guidebook that
outlines all of the work that you can do at the staff

2 level, and it includes a lot about, you know,
3 replacement materials, things that make the work
4 potentially cheaper, and regular maintenance doesn't
5 need a permit from us at all, so, you know, they
6 don't have to come to us for that. But other work, I
7 think it's great for people to talk to us early, and
8 we can try and help guide through that system and
9 make sure that they're meeting the guidelines, but
10 also that they're able to do this work, you know,
11 efficiently. We can issue the permit quickly, you
12 know, and our staff will help do the permit
13 application for them. Our staff regularly presents on
14 behalf of property owners at our Commission if
15 something needs to go to a hearing, so we really do
16 invest a lot of resources into helping individual
17 property owners, and we have a small grant program.
18 It is admittedly small, and we do partner, as I said,
19 with groups like the Landmarks Conservancy to, you
20 know, help with loan programs and other opportunities
21 like that for homeowners.

18 MINORITY LEADER CARR: So, you mentioned
19 the grant opportunity, right, which I think is for
20 interior and façade work, ranging from...

21 LISA KERSAVAGE: It's for exterior, yeah.

2 MINORITY LEADER CARR: Exterior work. So,
3 is that completely federally funded? It's all
4 community development block grant funding?

5 LISA KERSAVAGE: It is.

6 MINORITY LEADER CARR: So, in terms of
7 other grant opportunities, you mentioned this
8 partnership with the Conservancy, but do you think
9 Landmarks has the bandwidth to do more in terms of
10 trying to coordinate all the different private grant
11 opportunities that you could help a Landmark designee
12 seek in the event that they need to do work that
13 either doesn't qualify for your grant, or maybe
14 you've already expended your fiscal year's worth of
15 funds?

16 LISA KERSAVAGE: Yes. And yeah, and our
17 grant program is a little bit limited, and also
18 property owners have to meet the federal criteria
19 for, you know, their income levels so that also is a
20 bit of a challenge. You know, I think we really do
21 rely on our non-profit partners to help us share, you
know, about these different opportunities, and that's
important to us. There's also a state homeowner tax
credit that I think is important. I would like to see
us do some more education in that and try and grow

2 that program as well. It is for certain census
3 tracts, but I think another opportunity for helping
4 property owners. But I think we have the bandwidth.
5 We, you know, have invested quite a bit in outreach.
6 It's a really important aspect of what we do, and I
7 think we have the bandwidth to do more.

8 MINORITY LEADER CARR: And so do you think
9 that you'd be able to conduct public sessions in
10 conjunction with, you know, not-for-profit partners
11 on the availability of both public and non-public
12 grants for these sorts of projects? Particularly, you
13 know, a lot of folks don't even know, you know,
14 what's out there, let alone to come to you and say,
15 can I apply for this? I think you kind of have to
16 meet people where they are.

17 LISA KERSAVAGE: I totally agree. And what
18 we typically do is a session on how to get a permit
19 from LPC, but then we also add to that, you know, our
20 information on our grant program. The Landmarks
21 Conservancy will often join with us, and we do it
kind of historic district by historic district to
keep it small, to be able to answer all of these
permitting questions, but also make sure they have
the financial resources information as well. We have

2 also done a session with the State Historic
3 Preservation Office on a Zoom to try and get a larger
4 audience and also then have that information
5 available on YouTube for people to reference and
6 probably time for us to do that again. So, you know,
7 it's important work and we're happy to keep doing it.

8 MINORITY LEADER CARR: Appreciate that
9 answer.

10 And, you know, I think one of the
11 concerns I have, and I know many of my constituents
12 has, is that the limited availability of funding
13 streams with respect to supporting historic
14 preservation often leads to projects coming to the
15 Commission and the Commission having to consider
16 projects that really run across purposes with
17 historic preservation. And so the case in point that
18 I'm thinking of is the Ernest Flagg Estate in my
19 District, formerly the St. Charles Seminary. There
20 was a couple of different iterations of residential
21 developments for that property that I think everyone
kind of universally felt compromised the historic
nature of the site, but LPC kind of saw it, just
looked at it through the prism of, you know, does
this development going to further the preservation of

2 the buildings we actually care about? Even though,
3 you know, I think that there was a strong case to
4 make that the entire site was worthy of being
5 considered as a whole rather than just the structures
6 that met the designation. So, I think that that's
7 something to kind of flag for the future. And would
8 you just kind of shed some light on how you would
approach those sorts of situations?

9 LISA KERSAVAGE: Sure. And I'm not sure
10 that I have a lot of detailed knowledge about the
11 specific applications, you know, that came to us,
12 but, you know, I think when we designate a property,
13 we do write a designation report that outlines the
14 significance of the designation and whether it's, you
15 know, the buildings or the buildings and the site,
16 and that does really guide us in our approvals. You
17 know, we are mindful that sometimes there are
18 properties that are maybe large that have been vacant
19 for some time that need some adjacent development to
20 help, you know, invest into the primary building. So,
21 that is something that we, you know, that we're
mindful of. But I think that the approvals are
usually laid out based on the significance that we,

2 you know, of the designation itself. But I think it's
3 a good point and important for us to think about.

4 MINORITY LEADER CARR: So when you have a
5 structural designation, right, that doesn't apply
6 necessarily to the entire property, is there any
7 level of analysis that's taken into account beyond
8 just safeguarding the building from a safety and
9 preservation standpoint during the construction plan,
10 but rather how it impacts the building, the view of
11 it, and all these other different aspects that really
12 help make the building what it is based on the way it
13 was situated at the time of the designation as
14 opposed to how it will be situated after a
15 development has taken place?

16 LISA KERSAVAGE: Yeah. And I mean, it
17 really does depend on, you know, whether we've
18 designated just the building or site or we've
19 designated it, you know, with adjacent land, you
20 know, but I think, you know, it's the Commissioners,
21 if it's something that's going to a public hearing,
you know, can't help but think about that larger
context, but I think we are bound by the law of what
we regulate. And so, if we have only designated part
of it, we really can't regulate what's not

2 designated. So, it varies, I think, property by
3 property.

4 MINORITY LEADER CARR: Okay. Thank you.

5 Thank you, Chair.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Thank you, Chair.

7 And congratulations on your nomination.

8 You know, part of my questions will be
9 hyper-local and then spread out. In communities like
10 East New York and Brownsville, especially the
11 Nehemiah houses, residents are concerned about the
12 overdevelopment and the losing of character and
13 identity of neighborhoods that were built for working
14 class homeowners. How do you see the LPC working with
15 communities like the Nehemiah, East New York,
16 Brownsville, and New Lots to help preserve
17 neighborhood character while still allowing for smart
18 and thoughtful growth without changing the character
19 of the community?

20 LISA KERSAVAGE: It's a great question.

21 And, you know, when an area is, say, like undergoing
a rezoning or plan for growth, we do try and partner
with City Planning to look at the preservation
opportunities. You know, in fact, in East New York,

2 we did designate the Empire State Dairy on Atlantic
3 Avenue that has the new development behind it.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Correct. Yes.

5 LISA KERSAVAGE: And, yeah, we crafted the
6 designation to keep the front building, but then to
7 allow the housing to be built behind it. So, I
8 thought that was a creative way to both have the
9 preservation and, you know, the new housing. But, you
10 know, our job is to protect historic character, not
11 necessarily to stop change. But I understand that,
12 you know, when there is change and when there's new
13 development that it can be upsetting to people.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Right.

15 LISA KERSAVAGE: I think, you know, we do
16 want to make sure that we are looking at potential
17 designations in those areas that are experiencing
18 change. You know, we've done surveys in East New
19 York. I think there's still interesting resources out
20 there. I'm happy to talk to you.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Okay. Well, we'd
definitely love to have more conversation on that.

One thing we hear often from communities
is that conversations around landmarking usually
happen after development have already started and

2 residents feel like, you know, like they're playing
3 catch up. As the Commissioner, would you support
4 early engagement with communities and more proactive
5 approach to identifying neighborhoods with historical
6 or cultural significance before they are heavily
7 impacted by development?

8 LISA KERSAVAGE: Yeah. And, you know, we,
9 again, working with City Planning, you know, recently
10 with the Midtown South rezoning, for example, we
11 designated five important historic resources in
12 advance of that rezoning. And, you know, I think that
13 we looked at places that were both historically and
14 culturally significant, but also had what we call it
15 placemaking, you know, that had a real presence in
16 the neighborhood, that their preservation would help
17 retain that character of the area while it also was
18 undergoing some redevelopment. So, I think that's,
19 you know, that's something that's important to me.
20 We've done that with various rezonings in the Gowanus
21 Rezoning, we did that as well. We designated five
buildings there too. So, you know, I think it's good
planning to sort of bring the preservation and
planning issues together. So, happy to continue to do
that when it's appropriate.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Thank you. Thank
3 you for your response on that.

4 As you know, many NYCHA residents across
5 the city, including in my District, which has about
6 12 NYCHA developments, have concerns about the
7 long-term future of public housing under this
8 Administration and its continued push to privatize
9 developments or place developments into the RAD-PACT
10 program. Residents are concerned not only about
11 management changes from NYCHA to private managers,
12 but also about preserving the identity, the history,
13 and the community fabric, which these developments
14 over time, as we've seen a conversion surrounding
15 places like Fulton-Chelsea-Elliott, for example,
16 where they are looking to completely demolish that
17 development. What role, if any, do you believe the
18 LPC can play in helping preserve historically and
19 culturally significant public housing communities as
20 conversions and around redevelopment and
21 modernization of NYCHA continues?

LISA KERSAVAGE: Sure. I mean, we have
designated two NYCHA complexes, you know, and I think
what we've really looked at with those is kind of the
first sort of the prototypes of the housing. One is

2 Williamsburg housing and the other one, I'm
3 forgetting the name in Harlem. And so really looking
4 at some of the earliest housing too, that kind of
5 embodies that type.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Right.

7 LISA KERSAVAGE: You know, and I think
8 that those were important designations for us,
9 important for the city. You know, I'm not necessarily
10 sure that we would be looking at more designations of
11 NYCHA since we've done these really important ones.
12 You know, so I know, you know, there's some that are
13 on the national register and they're able to use
14 federal historic tax credits, which is very
15 important. So, we've played a small role in that
16 review process, but I think the designations we've
17 done are great and important. And we've been happy to
18 work with NYCHA as they improved those two
19 designations.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Okay. NYCHA
21 developments are home to generations of New Yorkers
and represent an important part of the city's social
and cultural history, especially for Black and Brown
communities and working-class families. Do you
believe there should be broader conversations around

2 recognizing the historical and cultural significance
3 of certain NYCHA campuses or public housing
4 communities, even if preservation looks different
5 from the traditional landmarking?

6 LISA KERSAVAGE: It's a great question.
7 And I do think there's very important history there.
8 And I think that the right tool potentially is the
9 one that's being used, which is the National
Register.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Right.

11 LISA KERSAVAGE: There's been important
12 history documented that is actually ongoing. And I
13 think that puts it into the formal record that this
14 history is very, very important, very interesting,
15 you know, public housing, you know, and how it has
16 supported New Yorkers is so important.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Right.

18 LISA KERSAVAGE: And so I think that that
19 tool that's being used is actually the right one. You
20 know, I'm not sure that necessarily the regulatory
21 arm of LPC is necessarily necessary, but I think
documenting that history, the way it's being done now
is very important.

COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Okay.

2 One concern I hear often from residents
3 is that redevelopment conversations can sometimes
4 happen to communities instead of with communities.
5 And from your perspective, how can the LPC help
6 ensure residents have a stronger voice in
7 conversations about preserving public housing,
8 working class, Black and Brown neighborhoods, when it
9 comes to preserving the identity and also looking at
10 the community history before major development
11 decisions are made. And, while I also understand that
12 the, you know, the City's pushed for more housing, we
13 also have to make sure that we're protecting the OG,
14 which I call the oldest affordable housing stock in
15 the City of New York, which is NYCHA, and not selling
16 it out. So, I just want to kind of get your
17 perspective of what the LPC would do in those
18 situations.

16 LISA KERSAVAGE: Yeah. I mean, I think
17 it's hard for LPC when, unless it's actually
18 designated by us, we don't necessarily have a role. I
19 agree that those conversations are really important
20 to have. You know, when we did do review proposed
21 work on the two that we have designated, we did have

2 community testimony and that's a very important part
3 of our process.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Right.

5 LISA KERSAVAGE: But, you know, I think
6 that those conversations, I think there's people in
7 the City really good at running those kinds of
8 conversations. I'm not sure how much we would have to
add unless they're actually designated.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Is there a list
10 that exists of all the designated NYCHA developments?

11 LISA KERSAVAGE: Yes. And we're happy to
provide that to you.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Okay.

13 LISA KERSAVAGE: I'm sorry that I don't
14 have a top of mind, but we can provide that.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Once you hopefully,
once you become Chair, you can provide that.

16 And my last question pertains to Thomas
17 Jefferson High School, which there's been some
18 controversy around a particular statue of Thomas
19 Jefferson that is placed in the hallway of Thomas
20 Jefferson High School, and there's been multiple
21 petitions that have been circulated by the students
of Thomas Jefferson. Now it's a campus because it's

2 made up of multiple high schools asking that the
3 statue be removed, and this is from their own
4 knowledge and studying the history. So, we know that
5 the statue has been stated to us by DOE that the
6 statue is landmarked. We would love to work with you
7 to see how we can acquiesce to the wishes and the
8 desires of the students who wish to have that statue
removed from the hallway.

9 LISA KERSAVAGE: I'm happy to talk about
10 it. I'm not familiar with the situation. You know, if
11 this is a statue that say attached to the building or
it's just a statue...

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: It's a statue right
13 in the hallway. As soon as you walk into the
14 building, it's a big Thomas Jefferson statue, but it
15 was stated to us by a DOE that the statue is
16 landmarked. So, there were conversations around
17 covering the statue up or removal of the statue. And
18 again, I just want to say that this is something that
19 came from the students who said that they didn't want
that statue in their hallways. They have to walk past
it as they're going to class.

20 LISA KERSAVAGE: Yeah. If it's on the
21 interior and it is an individual landmark, I'm not

2 quite sure, but if it's on the interior, I don't
3 think that we would regulate it at all actually.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: There's no
5 regulation?

6 LISA KERSAVAGE: But we can look into that
7 to confirm that. I probably shouldn't say that.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: So interior
9 landmarking, who would that go through?

10 LISA KERSAVAGE: So, we have about 120
11 interior landmarks across the city. They're very
12 rare. I don't know that we have any high schools that
13 have interior landmarks. I could be wrong about that.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Right.

15 LISA KERSAVAGE: But typically when we've
16 designated school buildings, we don't do the interior
17 as well. So, and even if it is a monument on the
18 outside, you know, we have approved removals of
19 certain monuments. Sometimes we don't regulate them.
20 It depends. But we could certainly look into this
21 some more.

COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: That's what we
want. We want folks to get information back to us
that's accurate. But according to the DOE, they're
saying that it's landmarked.

2 LISA KERSAVAGE: Okay. We can look into
3 it.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Thank you. Thank
5 you, Madam Chair.

6 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you.
7 We've also been joined by Council Member
8 Brewer.

9 I do have a few more questions and then
10 I'll turn it over to Council Member Brewer.

11 At the last hearing, the Council held on
12 nominations for the LPC, a number of advocates
13 testified that they hoped the LPC would deny the West
14 Park Presbyterian request for approval to demolish
15 their landmark building so that the site can be sold
16 to a residential developer. What is the current
17 status of the application?

18 LISA KERSAVAGE: So, this is a hardship
19 application and it is before the Commission now. And
20 like I said, hardship applications are very rare and
21 they are a fact-driven process. And so, you know, as
this is something I could potentially be voting on if
I weren't nominated or approved, you know, I have to
be careful about what I say. But I can assure you
that this is going through a very robust review.

2 We've had a public hearing. We've had two public
3 meetings. We've had lots of documents submitted to
4 us, both from the applicant and from individuals,
5 from organizations, from elected officials. So, this
6 is undergoing a very careful review.

6 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you.

7 So, you know, let's just take this
8 broadly, right? So, in this case, the church claims
9 it's a hardship to maintain its current building and
10 they said they will use the expected funds from the
11 sales to start a social justice fund. So, without
12 saying it's West Park, this current application, what
13 do you think about in general when, you know,
14 churches have these hardship applications?

14 LISA KERSAVAGE: Well, you know, there's
15 been so few hardship applications, you know, there's
16 been 23, I think, you know, over the history of the
17 Commission so they're very rare and each one is
18 different and each one is fact-driven. So, I'm not
19 sure that I can necessarily compare one to another.
20 You know, I would say just generally with faith-based
21 organizations, you know, we are sympathetic to their
needs. You know, they sometimes have buildings that
are expensive to maintain. They've experienced

2 deferred maintenance. You know, they want to put
3 money into their mission, not necessarily their
4 building sometimes. So, these raise complex issues
5 for the agency that we're very mindful of.

6 CHAIRPERSON UNG: So, what degree of
7 financial hardship should allow a property to be
8 exempt from the Landmark Law?

9 LISA KERSAVAGE: So, for hardship
10 application, you know, it is prescribed in the law,
11 you know, there's a judicial test, and so that is not
12 something that the Chair or the Commission, you know,
13 kind of unilaterally looks at. It's really prescribed
14 in a judicial test.

15 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Okay.

16 And you have been involved in landmarking
17 other religious sites that claim landmarking will be
18 a hardship. Is landmarking small churches for
19 dwindling congregations something that is bound to
20 fail? If not, how do you propose to keep churches
21 from claiming hardship and selling their landmark
sites to residential developers?

LISA KERSAVAGE: It's a good question.
It's a difficult question. You know, in terms of our
designations, about 1.5 percent are religious in

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2 nature so it's a small subset. You know, religious
3 properties are often, you know, in a community, some
4 of the most significant architecture, people are
5 very, whether they're a member of it or, you know, a
6 neighborhood resident, they often are, you know, sort
7 of the unofficial landmarks or sometimes official
8 landmarks of a neighborhood. So, you know, we
9 understand that there's competing issues here. You
10 know, we've worked with many religious institutions
11 across the city to help them. We have a team at LPC
12 that is dedicated to permitting just for religious
13 institutions. We think that's really important
14 because they know the building types really well.
15 They often know the congregations or the institutions
16 that can really help them, and, you know, I think
17 we're sympathetic to these issues and to, in some
18 cases, the congregation is getting smaller. So, you
19 know, and when we think about new designations for
20 religious institutions, you know, we are very careful
21 with those. We do get a lot of requests for
evaluation for religious institutions. You know, we
prioritize a very small number because we understand
that these are, you know, they're facing difficult
issues at the moment, but we've also helped religious

2 institutions grow too. We've approved new buildings
3 adjacent to churches or in the, you know, on a campus
4 in a recent case, an addition, you know, so we've
5 tried to figure out ways that we can help them be
6 financially stable while also retaining the landmark
or historic district building.

7 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. I do have two
8 more questions, but I'd like to turn it over to
9 Council Member Brewer.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I landmarked that
11 damn church and just want to make it very, very
12 clear, and I will make sure that it is there forever,
but thank you for your comments.

13 Just generally about the churches. So,
14 when I was dealing with one other church, St. Paul
15 and St. Andrew, we managed to get the basement where
16 there is a non-profit to be a condo working with OMB.
17 So, my question is just generally, do you have any
18 creative answers? I want these churches, synagogues
19 to survive, not to be torn down. So, my question
20 would be, are there any other ideas you might have to
21 give them funding? I know that we cannot give them,
State does, but the City can't give them funding for
religious purposes. Are there any other suggestions

2 that you have about how to maintain them when they
3 are landmarked? Because the roof on St. Paul is five
4 and a half million. Right now, they're raising the
5 money, and there are certain criteria that OMB
6 demands. If you are giving City money, sometimes the
7 churches and synagogues don't want to abide by those
8 rules. So, it is complicated, but we do have to
9 figure out because they cannot survive without some
of the funding.

10 LISA KERSAVAGE: Yeah. And there's certain
state funding. I know that...

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: State can do it.

12 LISA KERSAVAGE: Yeah, the State can do
13 it.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: ADA ramps, they
can do some.

15 LISA KERSAVAGE: Yeah. And it is a
16 challenging issue, and I think, you know, it depends
17 on the particular resource as well. So, you know, I,
18 I think City of Yes has opened up opportunities for
19 some development if there's a campus or parish
20 ground, you know, there could be additional
development. I think that can be important.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Manhattan doesn't
3 have much of that, but I hear you.

4 LISA KERSAVAGE: Yeah. It might be more
5 in, in the boroughs that that's an option, but I
6 think that's really important. And we have worked
7 with FBOs on approving, you know, new buildings or
other kinds of work, including in Manhattan.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Right. Mount
9 Pleasant on 81st Street. I'm aware.

10 LISA KERSAVAGE: And Lower East Side as
11 well. So, I think that's really important. You know,
12 the improvements to Federal Historic Tax Credit you
13 know, that could help, I wonder, you know, if there
14 is public-private partnership or syndication of tax
15 credits. Right now, it's not used maybe as much as it
could be, but I think that could be potentially an
opportunity as well.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. That's a
17 topic that really needs more intense discussion. I
18 feel strongly.

19 Second. The communities, I was able to
20 landmark West End Avenue, 850 buildings, but just
21 generally, because we had the funding in the
neighborhood to hire, in this case, Angel Dulcar, to

2 do the work. So, my question is, is there funding for
3 other historic districts and neighborhoods that may
4 not be able to raise that kind of money? Because when
5 historic districts come to particularly large ones,
6 they need to have, I think, some background and some
7 work done, and then you can supplement it. So, are
8 you making some effort? I'm very bad. I would
9 landmark historic district the whole city. I say
10 right into the microphone, and I get in a whole bunch
11 of trouble, and I don't care. But the issue is, for
12 me, is how do you get other historic districts and
13 neighborhoods that may not have that kind of
14 resource? What are you doing about that?

15 LISA KERSAVAGE: And I actually said this
16 before you came in.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'm sorry. I was
18 at another hearing next door.

19 LISA KERSAVAGE: I don't think that we
20 need additional resources to do that, and I don't
21 think that communities should feel an obligation to
provide that level of information to us. We do have a
research department. They can undertake this work.
You know, it's always helpful to get information.
It's helpful to get...

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, are you doing
3 work with the communities to say this is a potential
4 historic district, or do they have to come to you?
5 How are we making it clearer to people?

6 LISA KERSAVAGE: So, for example, we just
7 designated two historic districts in Brooklyn and in
8 Flatbush, and, you know, we came up with the
9 boundaries. We had surveyed in the air before. We
10 resurveyed it. We developed the boundaries. To be
11 honest, you know, there was the community had hoped
12 we would do more but we didn't find that, you know,
13 some of those areas merited, but there's back and
14 forth on this, but really this was work that our
15 research department undertook. Nobody needed to pay
16 anything to do that. I don't think that communities
17 should feel obligated to do that. We're happy to work
18 with the preservation organizations. You know, even
19 if we just get rough boundaries, we can look at that
20 and, you know...

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: We were told in
the past that we needed to come up with funding in
order to have at least an initial presentation, but
it's good to hear. I would love to see, as time goes
on, if you are confirmed that LPC says, let's look

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2 at, I'm making this up, these 10 areas and let's get
3 going on them. Because, you know, people in Harlem
4 complain correctly that they don't feel that they
5 have enough historic districts. I agree, but they
6 also would need some help in identifying them and
7 hoping... it takes time and money to get those areas
8 designated, all the land all the research. So, you're
saying you can do all that?

9 LISA KERSAVAGE: Well, and I will say that
community board did a historic preservation plan and
10 they, you know, identified various districts and
11 we've actually designated, I think, three of the...

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Right. Harlem now
would like more.

13 LISA KERSAVAGE: I totally understand.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And I'm with them.

15 LISA KERSAVAGE: We've worked with them in
16 recent years to do three really important district
17 and really identifying and those social justice and
civil...

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And the 158
19 houses. I'd still like to get them historic district.
20 I'm just saying, okay. Would you be a loud voice, I
21 hope, I think you said so in your testimony about the

2 notion that affordable housing versus landmarking is
3 not a good scenario that we feel that they go
4 together, that you can have affordable housing and it
5 can be landmarked. Is that something that you would
6 talk about?

6 LISA KERSAVAGE: Well, I think...

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I don't like that
8 scenario.

9 LISA KERSAVAGE: Yes-and answer for that
10 but, you know, I do think that the preservation of
11 buildings can also lead to preservation of affordable
12 units, but I also think that it's really important
13 that we create new housing as well. So I think it's
14 both, and I think that we need to, you know, think
15 about how can we add new housing in historic
16 districts as well.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Because I
16 would tell you in some cases, people think that you
17 know, you are destroying communities if you have a
18 landmarking and I, or historic districts, and I
19 totally disagree with that.

19 A plaque program. That's obviously
20 Barbara Diamond, Steve, she's been doing that for
21 years. I have a bill in this Council that would love

2 to have more plaques on buildings and so on to
3 designate historic culturally or architecturally. Is
4 that something that you would support? Do you have
5 any thoughts about that?

6 LISA KERSAVAGE: Yes. Well, so the New
7 York Landmarks Preservation Foundation has a plaque
8 program, but then other organizations have plaque
9 programs as well and to steal a pun from our General
10 Counsel, you know, we are mindful of plaque buildup
11 on some buildings that we don't want to have multiple
12 plaques.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: No, I'm not saying
14 a lot of... there's a lot of places that there are no
15 plaques at all, you know?

16 LISA KERSAVAGE: Certainly. I mean, our,
17 our staff regularly approves them, you know, and we
18 help with the Foundation's the text of the plaque
19 and, you know, other information for them, but
20 otherwise, you know, individual property owners come
21 to us all the time as approve plaque placements
regularly.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: You probably
23 talked about this earlier, but is there a backlog in
24 terms of, like, how long does it take if a building

2 comes to you and it would be hopefully designated and
3 there's a proposal? Obviously, if there's concerns,
4 as there are with the church, that's different. But
5 for a normal... I live in a historic district, my
6 District office is in a historic district. If I could
7 interior my house, I would make that a landmark
8 inside, but I was told I couldn't do that. I
9 renovated right back to 1896, and there's nothing
10 different than 1896. Looks just like it. All the
11 holes and everything. So, my question is, what is a
12 backlog if somebody wants to have, you know, there's
13 a designate or hope for a designation? How long does
14 it take? I mean, obviously, it's average.

15 LISA KERSAVAGE: Yeah. I wouldn't say that
16 we have a backlog. You know, I think for the actual
17 designation process from the, you know, the
18 calendaring to the designation, you know, we've been
19 moving quite efficiently. Usually, an individual
20 landmark takes three months to six months, and a
21 district probably somewhere between four months and a
year, which is well below what the law requires us to
do. You know, in terms of, you know, something, what
we have prioritized, you know, we're constantly
studying buildings across the city. We don't have an

2 application process for designations so there's not
3 necessarily a measurable time between, say, if
4 somebody puts in a request for evaluation to when we
5 actually designate something, if it merits, because
6 there's a lot of process of what we're prioritizing.
7 You know, we're trying to also really look at
8 equitable designations across all five boroughs. So,
9 something may merit designation, but we don't
10 necessarily prioritize it, you know, at a given time.
11 So, it's not really measurable. It depends.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Thank you
13 very much, but I am going to make sure that church
14 survives. Thank you.

15 LISA KERSAVAGE: Understood.

16 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. I only have
17 two more questions.

18 LISA KERSAVAGE: Okay.

19 CHAIRPERSON UNG: LPC has designated some
20 historic sites that have unremarkable aesthetic
21 features, such as the James Baldwin House. Also,
refused to designate other sites that hold historic
significance for certain communities because they
lack high architectural distinctions, such as St.
Elizabeth Church on Upper East Side. Doesn't the

2 requirement that some historical sites have high
3 architectural distinctions, while not requiring the
4 same of others, illustrate that LPC standards, the
5 very least, are subjectively applied?

6 LISA KERSAVAGE: Thank you for that
7 question. And, you know, I think it's an important
8 one. You know, the James Baldwin House, I think, is
9 an incredibly important designation and, while it's
10 not architecturally distinguished, it does reflect
11 the time that James Baldwin lived there. He purchased
12 the property when it was basically a row house that
13 was converted to a multifamily house and stripped at
14 a certain point. And so, it reflects the time that he
15 purchased the property. He lived there, his family
16 lived there. He talked about the property being
17 important to him. And so, because it has this strong
18 connection to him and his productive time, we felt it
19 met our criteria for designation. It was an important
20 designation to reflect Black history and also LGBTQ
21 history. So to me, that is an important designation
on the Upper West Side.

19 You know, I understand when we don't, for
20 church buildings or for religious institution
21 buildings, you know, they are often quite lovely

2 buildings, and so we do have a higher standard for
3 those buildings and we don't necessarily prioritize
4 as many religious institutions for designations. So,
5 you know, it's hard to compare the two buildings, but
6 I think that the James Baldwin, we don't designate
7 many buildings related to a person. That to us was a
8 very important designation.

9 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Okay. I'll just end it
10 with in 11 years, since you joined LPC, have you
11 found that the public is more or less skeptical of
12 the LPC's decisions?

13 LISA KERSAVAGE: You know, I love New York
14 and I love New Yorkers and, you know, I think there's
15 a healthy skepticism you know, for everything that
16 happens in the city. So, you know, I think that, you
17 know, we have an outsized impact in the city. There's
18 an outsized interest in New York City's historic
19 buildings. People care a lot about the places they
20 live and what it looks like. So I don't know that
21 it's changed much, but I welcome, you know, all kinds
of opinions from New Yorkers.

CHAIRPERSON UNG: You're indeed a group of
diverse opinions.

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2 I would like to thank you for joining us
3 today and providing your testimony. You are now
4 excused.

5 I will now open up the floor to public
6 for comments. If you wish to speak, please fill the
7 appearance card with the Sergeant-at-Arms and wait to
be recognized.

8 We ask that you please limit your
9 comments to two minutes and, if you have a written
10 statement, please provide a copy of that statement to
11 the Sergeant-at-Arms. I'd like to invite up Mr.
12 Tolbert, Mr. Sean Khorsandi, Mr. Turan, and Ms. Peg
Breen.

13 Okay. Thank you. I'm going to go from the
14 left to the right. You can start.

15 FRAMPTON TOLBERT: Good morning, Council
16 Members and Chair Ung. My name is Frampton Tolbert.
17 I'm an Executive Director of the Historic Districts
18 Council, the citywide advocacy organization for New
19 York's historic neighborhoods. We collaborate and
20 represent more than 500 community partner
21 organizations, helping preserve the places that
matter to them. We are here to testify today on the
nomination of Lisa Kersavage as Chair of the

2 Landmarks Preservation Commission. HCC has worked
3 with the nominee for many years in her role at the
4 LPC, as well as at other institutions such as the
5 Municipal Art Society and Friends of the Upper East
6 Side. We think this role does require formal
7 preservation knowledge and experience and are pleased
8 to see someone with that experience nominated. We
9 look forward to working with the Chair to further
10 preservation across the city, especially in
11 communities that have been overlooked and are less
12 invested in by the LPC. We urge the City Council to
13 make sure that the LPC is carrying out its duty to
14 designate the places that matter. In the previous
15 mayoral administration, designations fell
16 dramatically and we lost significant places like the
17 Pennsylvania Hotel and 270 Park Avenue to name just
18 two that could have been retained and repurposed for
19 housing or other uses. We also ask that the LPC
20 provide more transparency in decision-making around
21 its equity framework, which aims to ensure a fair
representation of New York City's diverse history.
There are many communities that still do not feel
their neighborhoods have been adequately represented
in landmark designations, East Harlem, East New York,

2 Parkchester, Astoria, the Lower East Side, and
3 Bayside to name just a few.

4 Finally, I would ask that the City
5 Council work with the LPC to make sure that
6 preservation is part of the solution for the housing
7 crisis in New York City. This includes both the
8 preservation of existing housing, the numerous
9 historic apartment buildings and tenements, as well
10 as new housing. The LPC has approved numerous
11 proposals for conversion of housing and new housing
12 in historic districts, but in many ways has barely
13 scratched the surface on what could be possible.

14 Thank you for consideration of our
15 remarks and we look forward to our continued work
16 with the LPC in preserving New York City.

17 SEAN KHORSANDI: Good morning,
18 Commissioners and Council Members. Sean Khorsandi for
19 Landmark West.

20 Over the years, we've had the pleasure of
21 working with Lisa in her prior roles across a variety
of landmarks issues. With Lisa, the City has an
experienced official who understands the intricacies
and flexibility of the Landmarks Law and can begin
work day one. While her knowledge of the entire New

2 York City landmarks process is extensive, her ability
3 to respond to special circumstances and preservation
4 issues with extraordinary elan makes her an
5 exceptional candidate. We've witnessed her commitment
6 to addressing vulnerable buildings. The most
7 vulnerable New York City landmark is West Park
8 Presbyterian Church. We are confident that upon
9 analysis of the facts, the reality of this
10 self-imposed hardship will be clear to the
11 Commission. Lisa has also worked to recognize
12 underrepresented communities and typologies. We all
13 know that landmark status can not only stabilize a
14 community and protect affordability, but also bring
15 socioeconomic benefits. It's important that
16 underrepresented stories continue to be told. The
17 West Side is home to a cacophony of architectural
18 styles and typologies and diverse histories, many
19 which remain unprotected. We have significant sites
20 of urban renewal, including NYCHA's Amsterdam houses.
21 Among the first post-war housing in Manhattan, the
site first acquired first via eminent domain in order
to clear historically Black and Puerto Rican
neighborhood of San Juan Hill. Under the current
White House Administration, modernism is under

2 attack. Despite having numerous modern structures
3 within our boundary, one of the most significant
4 modernist campuses, Lincoln Center, also unprotected.
5 We have extant model tenements that bear witness to
6 the evolution of housing reforms in the city, not
7 protected. And the first of its typology, PS-165,
8 architect C.B.J. Snyder's first use of the H Plan for
9 public schools, which became the citywide standard,
10 not protected. Despite success, there's still so much
11 work to do to see designations that bear and reflect
12 the true breadth of our diverse, dense, and deserving
13 neighborhood. Lisa Kersavage possesses all the
14 characteristics required for the Chair, her
15 expertise, enthusiasm, intelligence, and objectivity.
16 We look forward to working with her and the agency to
17 achieve our mutual goals.

18 PEG BREEN: Good morning, Chair Ung and
19 Committee Members. I'm Peg Breen, President of the
20 New York Landmarks Conservancy. We're a 53-year-old
21 preservation organization that works to save the
city's architectural heritage through advocacy,
loans, grants, and technical help to the owners of
historic properties. Through the years, we've loaned

2 and granted almost 63 million dollars for
3 preservation work.

4 I'm pleased to support the nomination of
5 Lisa Kersavage as Chair of the Landmarks Preservation
6 Commission. As you've heard, she comes with a deep
7 background in preservation and has served as the
8 Commission has worked to make its rules and
9 applications more user-friendly and to ensure that
10 buildings and places important to the city's diverse
11 communities are represented in designations. As you
12 know, this is an important position. When your
13 predecessors at the city Council passed the City's
14 Landmarks Law, they noted it was designed to protect
15 the city's history and identity, but they also said
16 preservation would be important to the city's
17 economy, and it has been. An economic study we
18 commissioned found that preservation provides some
19 9,000 local jobs and paychecks of over 500 million
20 dollars a year. Heritage tourism is a key component
21 of our visitor industry.

Preservation also has a role to play in
our housing needs. The Commission routinely approves
new buildings in appropriate and historic districts
and supports the conversion of commercial and civic

2 buildings into housing. While the number of landmark
3 buildings and districts is impressive, historic
4 districts still take up less than 5 percent of the
5 city's land. I've included a handy map to go with my
6 testimony. So, historic districts are not hampering
7 housing production, and there are buildings and
8 neighborhoods that still deserve to be designated. We
9 look forward to working with Lisa as the Commission
continues to protect our heritage and our economy.
Thank you.

10 ZEYNEP TURAN: Good morning, Chair Ung,
11 Committee Members. My name is Zeynep Turan. I'm
12 Director of Preservation at Friends of the Upper East
13 Side, an independent non-profit founded in 1982,
14 works to safeguard the neighborhood's architectural
15 legacy, livability, and sense of place. We are
16 especially proud of Ms. Lisa Kersavage's longstanding
17 connection to Friends, including her service as
18 Executive Director from 1999 to 2004. We support her
appointment as Chair of the Landmarks Preservation
Commission.

19 With over a decade at the LPC, she brings
20 deep knowledge of the agency, its policies, and the
21 city's historic built environment. We also urge

2 attention to pressing preservation challenges,
3 especially in Yorkville, where development pressure
4 heightened by the Second Avenue Subway threatens its
5 human scale and immigrant-rooted character. Over the
6 past decade, Friends has submitted 36 requests for
7 evaluation, but timely landmark designations remain
8 difficult for at-risk sites. We encourage the City
9 Council to examine the LPC evaluation criteria in
10 light of recent losses, such as St. Elizabeth of
11 Hungary Church, you mentioned, Chair, built in 1893,
12 and the Doelger Building, built in 1930. Despite new
13 research, neither was designated. St. Elizabeth has
14 been demolished now, and the Doelger Building faces a
15 similar fate. These cases highlight the need for a
16 faster, more responsive process before such
17 irreversible losses occur.

18 With designations rates declining,
19 particularly in Manhattan, Ms. Kersavage's
20 confirmation is an opportunity to strengthen the
21 LPC's proactive role and reverse this trend. Friends
continues to advocate for expanded protections on the
Upper East Side, including new historic districts
east of Third Avenue (TIMER CHIME) and we look
forward to working with her to advance preservation,

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2 secure new designations in Yorkville, and protect the
3 Upper East Side's historic fabric. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you, everyone.

5 I'd like to call next Ward Dennis and
6 Julius Saltzman.

7 Please, yes.

8 WARD DENNIS: Good morning, Chair Ung and
9 Council Members. My name is Ward Dennis. I've worked
10 as a historic preservation professional for 20 years,
11 or 30 years rather, and teach in the Historic
12 Preservation Program at the Graduate Center for
13 Planning and the Environment at the Pratt Institute.
14 I'm here to speak enthusiastically in support of Lisa
15 Kersavage's nomination for Chair.

16 I've known Lisa for most of my time
17 working in the historic preservation field. I first
18 met her when she was a graduate student at Columbia,
19 but we had the opportunity to work closely with her
20 about 10 years later when she was a Kress Fellow at
21 the Municipal Arts Society, and I was a member of
Community Board 1 in Brooklyn at the time of the 2005
Greenpoint-Williamsburg Waterfront rezoning. Working
with Lisa, the Community Board was able to understand
the impact of the rezoning on our historic industrial

2 fabric and to effectively advocate for the
3 designation of the Eberhard Faber Pencil Factory
4 Historic District. Lisa and MAS also helped us work
5 with industrial tenants faced with displacement as a
6 result of the rezoning.

7 Since taking on the role of Executive
8 Director at LPC, I've had the pleasure of working
9 with Lisa on a few occasions as part of the agency's
10 efforts to designate historic buildings. Lisa has
11 always shown an understanding and empathy for
12 property owners, community members, and stakeholders.
13 Throughout her career, Lisa has worked at the nexus
14 of preservation, sustainability, and affordability.
15 She has a deep knowledge of preservation and of our
16 city, and I am confident that she will continue this
17 record, leading LPC under this Administration. Lisa
18 is a remarkable public servant, and I am pleased to
19 support her nomination to be the next Chair of LPC.
20 Thank you.

21 JUDITH SALTZMAN: Good morning, Chair Ung
and Members of the Committee. I'm Judith Saltzman, an
architect and preservationist, and I'm pleased to be
here today to enthusiastically endorse the

2 appointment of Lisa Kersavage as Chair of the New
3 York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.

4 I've known Lisa for over two decades and
5 have admired her unwavering dedication to our city,
6 its past and its future. Lisa has a profound
7 understanding of how preservation connects to
8 citywide issues, its importance, its complexity, and
9 the need for collaborative decision-making. I worked
10 closely with Lisa when she served as the Senior
11 Director of Preservation and Sustainability at the
12 Municipal Art Society when I was Co-Chair of the
13 Preservation Committee. Lisa's work at MAS on
14 preservation and climate change is a superb example
15 of her capacity to initiate dialogue among
16 multidisciplinary professionals, resulting in shared
17 success. Commencing with concerns from our Committee
18 that City policy regarding sustainability favored
19 demolition and new construction over restoration and
20 improvement of existing older buildings, Lisa
21 organized a series of eight roundtables with experts
in a range of fields in urban sustainability. The
goal of finding common ground with preservation was
very successfully achieved.

2 Lisa's extensive professional experience
3 with significant New York City-based civic
4 organizations, coupled with her 11 years at the
5 Commission, provides her with the perfect background
6 to serve as Chair. Working with committees, boards,
7 regulators, and stakeholders on complex issues, Lisa
8 has exhibited an outstanding ability to draw people
9 of different viewpoints into intelligent and
productive dialogue and attain successful outcomes.

10 Astute, highly motivated, and
11 professional, Lisa has established the delicate
12 equilibrium of passion and practicality. Please
(TIMER CHIME) endorse her appointment as Chair.

13 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you all for your
14 testimony.

15 Are there any other members of public who
16 wish to testify?

17 Okay. Great. Seeing none, the public
18 hearing of these nominees are now closed.

19 I would like again to thank the nominee,
20 the members of the public, my Colleagues, and the
21 Committee, Committee Counsel and Staff, and the
Sergeant-at-Arms.

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AND ETHICS 85

2 This meeting is hereby adjourned. Thank
3 you. [GAVEL]

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4 C E R T I F I C A T E

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6
7 World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing
8 transcript is a true and accurate record of the
9 proceedings. We further certify that there is no
10 relation to any of the parties to this action by blood
11 or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome
12 of this matter.



18 Date July 15, 2026

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